



Committee on City Services and the Northampton City Council

Committee Members:

Councilor Dennis P. Bidwell

Councilor Maureen T. Carney

Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge

Councilor Ryan R. O'Donnell

MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 3, 2016

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Location: City Council Chambers

212 Main St., Northampton, Massachusetts

1. Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call: At 4:02 p.m. Vice-Chair Councilor LaBarge called the meeting to order. On a roll call the following City Councilors were present: Councilor LaBarge, Councilor Bidwell and Councilor O'Donnell. Councilor Carney arrived at 5:08 pm. No other City Councilors were present.

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Department Presentation: Lilly Library

Adam Novitt, Director of Lilly Library was present to talk to the Committee. Director Novitt explained that the mission statement of Lilly Library is:

"Lilly Library is dedicated to providing the best possible support for the cultural and intellectual lives of the residents primarily but not exclusively in the Villages of Florence and Leeds. Our goal is to ensure that all members of our community have free access to high quality printed materials, media and electronic resources and that programs will meet their informational and recreational needs. To achieve this goal we are committed to maintaining a welcoming library space and knowledgeable staff."

Lilly Library offers a summer reading program for children and other programs, including a knitting club. The library is striving to offer better services for people who work from home or people who are working the "gig economy". The library has increased its internet speed that is available to the library patrons. The library also has wireless printing capability and offers the use of a fax machine. More people working from their homes are coming to the library to do "work" and the library wants to support this. The library is also beginning to share some of its collections with Forbes Library. It is difficult for Lilly Library to purchase enough large print books to make the collection

interesting. So the library started to “check-out” books and audiobooks from Forbes to make them available to Lilly patrons. What makes a library valuable is to add new collections on the shelf. The library has also made available several databases. Patrons need only have a library card to access these tools.

The library budget that is paid for by the town is \$309,000; the total budget for the library is a little less than \$350,000. About \$40,000 is made up by the library via fees and fines, fees for services, gifts, state aid and fundraising. Director Novitt notes that the library is due for new computer hardware. They do have a relationship with Amherst College who has been willing to provide computers as they age out. Typically they are four to five years old but they fit the need for the library. Councilor O'Donnell inquired about the relationship with Amherst College; Director Novitt notes that before he was director at Lilly Library, he was the director for Pelham and Sunderland Libraries. He had heard about the program from patrons of the Sunderland Library and followed up on the information. He has continued to be a part of the program since joining Lilly Library. He also does try to minimize costs for the library by taking advantage of programs and other amenities that are offered by the community. Director Novitt is now a professor of Public Library Management for the Simmons Program. As such, he is trying to establish a work-study program with the college. Library students would come in and provide services to the community as part of the college learning experience. Approval to administer the program is highly expected.

The Library's budget shows a 4.33% increase. Part of this increase was derived from a formula which is called the MAR – the municipal allocation requirement. This formula is given by the Mass Board of Libraries Commissioners in order for the Library to qualify for state aid. The City indicated that they were able to provide a 2.75% increase within the budget. Back in 2009 or 2010, 4 hours of library service were cut from the budget. Two of those four hours will be restored which amounts to the 4.33% increase. The hours that will be added back are from 3 – 5 p.m. on Mondays. Regarding paid sick time, the part time library staff receive one week of prorated hours per year (one hour for every 52 hours worked). The new law states that for every 30 hours worked, an employee is entitled to one hour of sick time. There is some increase of liability to the Library; however, it is not as much as it would be if there was no policy at all. One policy that the Library is looking at is vacation time. Right now the cap is two weeks for support staff. One employee who has been there since 1987 only has 2 weeks of vacation time. The trustees will consider changing that policy. The Library staff also has no bereavement leave and there is no step raise system. The staff receives only the Federal COLA every year.

Councilor Bidwell asked why the Library's personnel doesn't conform to the City's personnel policy. Director Novitt explained that in years past the Library was much smaller. A lot of the policies have not been updated over the years. Personnel policies have lagged behind the growth. The Library is not run through the City's payroll system. The Library is its own 501-3C entity. A lot of the staff has been there for a long time. It is an extremely professional organization. The staff has been very stable; all positions are currently full. Saturday and Sunday are busy days. Sometimes it is difficult to staff on these days; the turnover is constant. Weekend hours are 10-5 on Saturday and 1-5 on Sunday. There are a mix of patrons who visit for several hours, and others who come in and out for a quick errand, and still others who come in for events at the library and stay an hour or so.

The Library receives approx. 231 patrons per day on average. The trend is a steady increase over the years. Many community groups use the library on a regular basis. The Community Room is available for use. In general the Library's policy is to provide the room free of charge for nonprofit organizations.

Regarding parking, there is generally not a problem in this area. When there are events scheduled at both the Civic Center and the Library, there could be a problem. The one concern is that there is only one handicap space for people with disabilities. It is worth a hard look at this issue.

Regarding renovations, only small painting projects are planned. In the near future, the Library would like to add comfortable seating. Also, the server, switches, and firewall for the computer system are due for an upgrade. The City's IT Director will be visiting the Library to help develop a plan.

The Library has Library System 1 and Library System 2 positions. These are typically positions of seniority. The administration is trying to look at more descriptive terms for all its positions.

Councilor Bidwell asked what maintenance tasks are handled by the City versus handled by the Library. Snow removal is handled by an outside contractor; where possible the Library will negotiate for the same contract rates that the City has, such as the service contract rate for the elevator. Certain jobs have been completed by the City's Electrician. Where possible, the Library does try to use Central Services, although there are some limits because the Library is not truly a City department. In the future, the Library will try to use the City's Dispatch Center for alarm issues.

4. Approve Minutes of Previous Meetings

A. Councilor Bidwell moved to approve the Minutes of August 29, 2016; Councilor O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

5. Items Referred to Committee:

A. 16.154 Appointments to Committees - Referred to Committee on September 1, 2016

Conservation Commission:

Lisa Fusco, 130 Cross Path Road, Northampton, term September 2016 - June 2019

The Administrative Assistant read a letter of support for the appointment of Lisa Fusco to the Conservation Commission from Kevin Lake, Chair of the Conservation Commission. Councilor LaBarge also spoke in favor of Ms. Fusco's appointment to the Commission. Councilor O'Donnell did not have a chance to speak to Ms. Fusco. Councilor O'Donnell appreciated the letter support from Kevin Lake, he respects Mr. Lake's opinion in this matter. He would feel most comfortable making a neutral recommendation back to the full City Council. Councilor Bidwell questioned why the recommendation would not be positive. Councilor O'Donnell notes that appointments do have to come to this committee for consideration and he believes that this is what the committee has done. He is aware that Ms. Fusco resigned previously from the Conservation Commission due to personal business reasons. He did not have a chance to speak to her. Councilor LaBarge moved to make a positive recommendation back to the full City Council. Ms. Fusco was interviewed a while ago and

there were never any concerns from the Chair of the Commission. Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

Councilor Bidwell noted that it is always helpful to get an opinion from Committee Chair that is positive. This means a lot to him when determining if a candidate would be a good fit on the committee.

Housing Partnership

- Richard Abuza, 245 Chestnut St., Florence, term July 2016 - June 2019 (Reappointment)
- Alison Brauner, 19 Market St., Apt. B, Northampton, term September 2016 - June 2019

Councilor Bidwell noted that he had a chance to talk with both of the applicants as well as Peg Keller who staffs the Housing Partnership. Ms. Keller is pleased with how the membership of the Housing Partnership has evolved. Mr. Abuza is delighted to continue with his service; and Ms. Brauner is an example of the new blood that has been added to the committee. She brings a youthful energy to the committee especially with her first hand experience on the streets.

Councilor Bidwell moved to send the appointments back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

Human Rights Commission:

- Karen Bellavance-Grace, 19 Church St., Northampton, term September 2016 - June 2019
- Davina Miller, 33 Summer St., Northampton, term September 2016 - June 2019

The Administrative Assistant read Councilor Carney's feedback that was submitted in writing:

*"I unequivocally **recommend** the appointments of Karen Bellavance-Grace and Davina Miller to the Human Rights Commission. Both women are known quantities of outstanding city service: Ms Bellavance-Grace serving for many years as Mayoral aide, and Ms Miller as School Committee member from Ward One. Each will also bring unique perspectives to the Commission: Ms Bellavance-Grace's dedication to social justice movements and work for the Unitarian-Universalists, and Ms Miller's experience as a psychologist and clinician."*

Councilor LaBarge agrees with what Councilor Carney had stated in her written submission. She moved to send the appointments back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

Public Shade Tree Commission:

- Todd Ford, 78 Fern St., Florence, term July 2016 - June 2019 (Reappointment)

Councilor LaBarge stated that Mr. Ford thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss his reappointment. He is currently the Vice-Chair of the Commission and he also represents the Public Shade Tree Commission on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee of the Transportation and Parking

Commission. His primary focus on the PSTC are: trees as a critical element of the urban design framework; regulatory consistency and coordination to ensure overall protection of public shade trees; creation of a new public shade tree protection ordinance; enhance public shade tree awareness; working collaboratively to create cross department coordination regarding inventories, plans, designs, and other city initiatives that impact the future of the City's urban forest. Accomplishments include: planting 100 shade trees ; setting up a volunteer structure; setting framework for a comprehensive regulation; working with Planning & DPW to ensure shade trees are an integral part of street design; and winning a grant for public shade tree inventory.

Councilor O'Donnell moved to return the appointment back to the full City Council; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

- Marilyn Castriotta, 79 West St., Northampton, term July 2016 - June 2019 (Reappointment)

Councilor LaBarge reports that Ms. Castriotta is delighted to continue on the Public Shade Tree Commission. Ms. Castriotta has been serving on this committee since the committee began in 2015. She is actively helping to develop plans for the long-range urban forest. She has co-crafted and analyzed the 10 question survey to Northampton citizens. She also organized Arbor Day events for 2016, including organizing tree planting events at the elementary schools. She has a passion for promoting the need for public shade trees and appreciates their value to cool streets, improve air quality, reducing home cooling and heating costs, increasing property values, creating habitats for wildlife, etc. As an environmental professional, Ms. Castriotta earned a Master's Degree in Conservation Biology. Ms. Castriotta has also held work related positions which demonstrate her competence in providing valuable input to the Commission.

Councilor LaBarge moved to send the appointment back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 3 yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

B. 16.167 - Refer Appointments to Committees-Referred to Committee on Sept. 15, 2016

Councilor O'Donnell moved to return all appointments back to the full City Council with a positive recommendation; Councilor Bidwell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on voice vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Carney).

Arts Council:

- Joseph Pesce, 685 Ryan Road, Florence – term October 2016 – June 2019 (Councilor LaBarge)

Councilor LaBarge received an e-mail from Mr. Pesce and they spoke on the phone as well. Mr. Pesce owns his own business. He and his family moved to Northampton five years ago and in an effort to get to know the community, he volunteered at different Art Council events.

Board of Assessors

- Denny Nolan, 319 Elm Street, Northampton – term October 2016 – June 2019 (Councilor Bidwell)
- Margo Welch, 143 Main Street, Northampton – term July 2016 – June 2019 (reappointment) (Councilor O'Donnell)

Councilor Bidwell notes that Mr. Nolan is a long time realtor in Northampton. He also has experience working in the Assessor's Office.

Councilor O'Donnell notes that Ms. Welch is someone that he has known and states that she is a self-employed attorney. She is eager to do the job and he feels that she is also qualified. 143 Main Street is Ms. Welch's business address. He thought that Ms. Welch moved to Easthampton, however, he has been informed by the Mayor's Office that she is residing on Coles Meadow Road in Northampton and is registered to vote in the City of Northampton.

Councilor Bidwell asked whether owning a business would qualify a candidate to be appointed to a committee. Councilor O'Donnell noted that members of committees must be residents of the City as spelled out in the City's Administrative Code.

Planning Board:

- Euripedes De Oliveira , Associate Member, 9 Washington Place, Northampton – term October 2016 – June 2019 (Councilor Carney)

The Administrative Assistant read Councilor Carney's feedback that was submitted in writing:

*I also **recommend** the appointment of Euripides De Oliveira as Associate member to the Planning Board. His resume shows him to be immensely qualified in the areas of urban studies, regional planning. In our conversation, Mr De Oliveira noted the global perspective he brings to his work, which also includes lecturer positions at UMASS Amherst. He is experienced in sustainability projects in the Los Angeles region, and has worked internationally in Sao Paulo, Brazil and El Salvador.*

6. New Business - None

Merridith O'Leary was unable to attend the meeting this afternoon. Councilor LaBarge had requested that she participate in the meeting to discuss vacant/abandoned properties. Councilor LaBarge noted that Director O'Leary is working on the issue with the Building Inspector's Office and does not feel she needs to attend the committee meeting at this time.

7. Adjourn: Councilor LaBarge moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:09 p.m.; Councilor O'Donnell seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote of 4 Yes, 0 No.

Prepared By:

P. Powers, Administrative Assistant to the City Council
413.587.1210; ppowers@northamptonma.gov